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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ

IRAQ

1. "A volley of propaganda"

Contributing foreign editor Eric Margolis wrote in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (3/3): "...[W]hat I dislike even more than Saddam's nasty regime are government lies and propaganda. Since 9/11, Americans have been subjected to the most intense propaganda campaign from their government since World War I. Much of the mainstream U.S. media have been intimidated by the Bush administration into unquestioningly amplifying its party line. Or, in the worst tradition of yellow, jingoist journalism, they act as cheerleaders for war.... The American public, often wobbly about geography, history and international affairs, has been alternatively terrified and enraged by bare-faced lies that Iraq was about to attack America with nuclear weapons or germs, and was a secret ally of al-Qaida. A shocking two-thirds of Americans mistakenly believe Iraq staged the 9/11 attacks.... It's frightening to see Bush claim with a straight face his war against Iraq will bring democracy and peace to the Mideast, and save Iraqis from repression. Why didn't he begin by saving Palestinians from the repression by his alter-ego, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon? If Bush really cared about Mideast democracy, he's had two years to do something about U.S.-sponsored dictatorships like Egypt and Pakistan, or medieval autocracies such as Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and America's Gulf protectorates. When Bush says he will bring democracy to benighted Iraqis, what he really means is U.S. rule. In Bush-speak, 'democracy' has been perverted to mean U.S. imperial hegemony.... Many Americans simply don't understand their leadership is about to plunge the nation into an open-ended, dangerous colonial war. All the propaganda about democracy, human rights and regional stability is the same kind of double-talk used by the 19th century British and French imperialists who claimed they were grabbing Africa and Asia to bring the benefits of Christian civilization to the heathens.... Misery loves company. An American-occupied Iraq looks destined to join the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza as another human, political and moral disaster for all concerned."

2. "Remaking the Arab world"

The conservative National Post editorialized (3/1): "In a speech to the American Enterprise Institute on Wednesday, U.S. President George W. Bush made the case for war in terms that transcend weapons of mass destruction and UN resolutions.... We hope the world pays heed to Mr. Bush's message. While disarming Iraq, ending the country's sponsorship of terrorism and liberating Saddam Hussein's subjects are all war-worthy goals, the greatest dividend to be hoped for in the long run is the transformation of the Arab Middle East.... In his speech on Wednesday, Mr. Bush declared that 'we will remain in Iraq as long as necessary,' and compared the coming reconstruction project with the rebuilding of Japan and Germany six decades ago.... The historical comparison is apt, and we hope Mr. Bush follows through on these words. Through its sustained presence in Iraq, the United States will have a rare opportunity to transform the Arab Middle East. It would be a tragedy if the President turned his back on this crucial enterprise once the immediate threat posed by Saddam is extinguished."

3. "Peace can still prevail"

The liberal Toronto Star opined (3/3): "...American pressure has stiffened the Security Council, which is forcing Saddam - at last - to disarm. But Bush is now perversely undermining the U.N. by making 'regime change' in Baghdad a requirement, in addition to disarmament.... Democrats in Congress may be too timid to challenge Bush. But polls suggest a fast-growing public preference in America for working within the U.N. to exhaust peaceful options. Enfeebled by years of sanctions, Iraq presents no immediate threat. The same can't be said of a Security Council at war with itself. Making specific demands of Saddam, instead of reiterating the Bush mantra that

'Iraq must disarm,' would silence those who contend that Bush can never be satisfied. Saddam's obduracy is infuriating. And he is dangerous.... Still, Saddam has blinked. That suggests there's a chance he can be disarmed peacefully. That would vindicate Bush. Reaffirm American leadership. Enhance U.S. prestige. And strengthen the United Nations. All without firing a shot. It's worth a try."

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